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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/696,947	10/27/2000	Kiichiro Sakashita	198801US3	6701

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EXAMINER

KEITH, JACK W

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
3641	

DATE MAILED: 06/20/2003

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No. 09/696,947	Applicant(s) Sakashita et al
Examiner Jack Keith	Art Unit 3641

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136 (a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on Apr 24, 2003

2a) This action is FINAL. 2b) This action is non-final.

3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11; 453 O.G. 213.

4) Claim(s) 13 and 14 is/are pending in the application.

4a) Of the above, claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

6) Claim(s) 13 and 14 is/are rejected.

7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.

8) Claims _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

11) The proposed drawing correction filed on _____ is: a) approved b) disapproved by the Examiner.
If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.

12) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

13) Acknowledgement is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) All b) Some* c) None of:
1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

*See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

14) Acknowledgement is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e).
a) The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.

15) Acknowledgement is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) 4) Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____

2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) 5) Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)

3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s). _____ 6) Other: _____

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DETAILED ACTION

Election/Restriction

1. Applicant's election with traverse of species A, b, ii, (2)(Al-Mg-Si) and AA(B₄C) in Paper No. 15 is acknowledged. The traversal is on the ground(s) that the restriction/election requirement is unduly burdensome. This is not found persuasive. It appears that the traversal is more appropriately aimed at the single species requirement of the Aluminum alloy and neutron absorber. As set forth in Paper no. 10 the single species requirement is to facilitate examining due to the broad range of materials/compositions available to applicant within the confines of his disclosure. A complete and thorough search of all of the possible combinations of materials constitutes a burden on the examiner.

The requirement is still deemed proper and is therefore made FINAL.

Response to Arguments

2. Applicant's arguments presented in Paper no. 9 with respect to claims 13-14 have been fully considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

Note applicant's amendment to claim 13 in Paper no. 15 "... absorbing rod comprising a solid structure ..." moots applicant's arguments regarding a homogenous absorber rod. Solid does not mean homogeneous.

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Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

3. The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

4. Claims 13 and 14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

In claim 13 it is unclear whether the control rod guide pipe of the spent fuel assembly, measuring pipe or casket is/are positively recited. Statements about intended uses, capabilities, or structures which may result upon the performance of future acts (i.e., insertable, when transporting), are not positive structural limitations and in this sense fail to comply with the requirements of the statute in failing to distinctly claim the actual invention. Note In re Collier, 158 USPQ 266.

Therefore, the metes and bounds of the claims are undefined.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

5. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless -

(e) the invention was described in a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention thereof by the applicant for patent, or on an international application by another who has fulfilled the requirements of paragraphs (1), (2), and (4) of section 371(c) of this title before the invention thereof by the applicant for patent.

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The changes made to 35 U.S.C. 102(e) by the American Inventors Protection Act of 1999 (AIPA) do not apply to the examination of this application as the application being examined was not (1) filed on or after November 29, 2000, or (2) voluntarily published under 35 U.S.C. 122(b). Therefore, this application is examined under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) prior to the amendment by the AIPA (pre-AIPA 35 U.S.C. 102(e)).

6. Claims 13 and 14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Haynes et al (5,965,829).

Haynes discloses applicant's inventive concept. An absorber rod (billet) comprised of aluminum alloy (Al-Mg-Si) and boron carbide wherein the aluminum alloy and boron carbide and homogeneously (uniformly) mixed. The aluminum alloy comprising particles having a diameter of 9-38 μm . The boron carbide being 2-45% volume and having a particle diameters of 20-40 μm . See columns 3-6, lines 66-42.

Note that statements of intended use, field of use, "which is to be to", or "when" clauses are essentially method limitations or statements of intended or desired use. Thus, these claims as well as other statements of intended use do not serve to patentably distinguish the claimed structure over that of the reference. See In re Pearson, 181 USPQ 641; In re Yanush, 177 USPQ 705; In re Finsterwalder, 168 USPQ 530; In re Casey, 512 USPQ 235; In re Otto, 136 USPQ 458; Ex parte Masham, 2 USPQ 2nd 1647.

See MPEP § 2114 which states:

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A claim containing a "recitation with respect to the manner in which a claimed apparatus is intended to be employed does not differentiate the claimed apparatus from the prior art apparatus" if the prior art apparatus teaches all the structural limitations of the claim. Ex parte Masham, 2 USPQ 2nd 1647

Claims directed to apparatus must be distinguished from the prior art in terms of structure rather than functions. In re Danly, 120 USPQ 528, 531.

Apparatus claims cover what a device is not what a device does. Hewlett-Packard Co. v. Bausch & Lomb Inc., 15 USPQ2d 1525, 1528.

As set forth in MPEP § 2115, a recitation in a claim to the material or article worked upon does not serve to limit an apparatus claim.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

7. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

8. Claims 13 and 14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Diersch et al (FR 2751118) in combination with. Haynes et al ('829)

Diersch discloses a known aluminum/boron absorbing rod having the same columnar shape of a control rod for a PWR inserted into the control rod guide tube of a fuel element prior to the fuel assembly being transported. See entire document.

As set forth above Haynes teaches the use of a homogeneous aluminum/boron absorber rod in the same field of endeavor.

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It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have modified the absorber rod of Diersch to have included the homogenous absorber rod teachings of Haynes, to gain the advantages thereof (preclude fracturing of the absorber material resulting in corrosion, voids, etc.), as such results are in more than the use of conventionally known absorber rod designs/materials available within the nuclear radiation shielding/absorption art.

Conclusion

9. The cited prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

10. Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however,

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will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

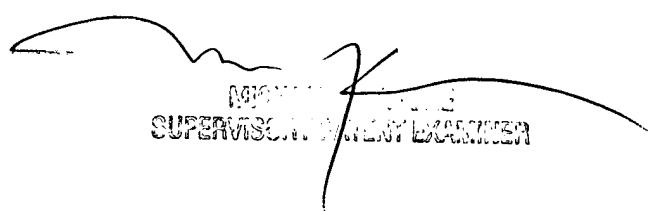
11. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Jack Keith whose telephone number is (703) 306-5752. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday through Friday from 7:00 to 4:00.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Michael Carone, can be reached on (703) 306-4198. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is (703) 305-7687.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 308-1113.

jwk

June 16, 2003


MICHAEL J. KEITH
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER